

Resisting the flood

Communities taking a stand against the imminent construction of Irrawaddy dams



According to Kachin legend, the confluence [Myitsone] is where the Father Dragon as well as his sons Hkrai Nawng and Hkrai Gam were born. Tradition says that if the waterway is broken and the dragons are disturbed, there will be a natural disaster.



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For more information please see www.burmariversnetwork.org

Contact: kdngchn@gmail.com

Message from KDNNG

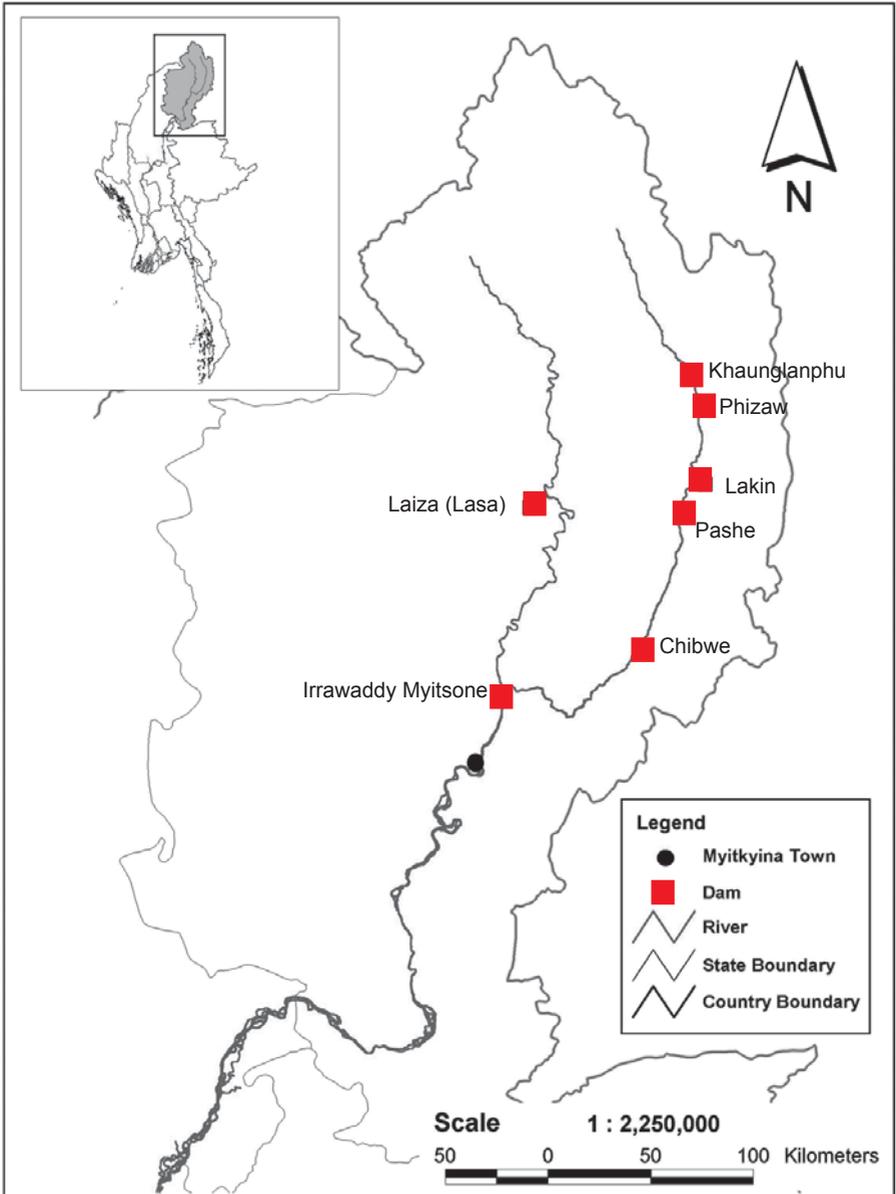
As a network of residents of Kachin State, we, the Kachin Development Networking Group, have been monitoring plans by the state-owned China Power Investment Corporation and Burma's military regime to build seven dams on the Irrawaddy River and its two main tributaries. In 2007 we published the report *Damming the Irrawaddy* which surveyed the environment and peoples in the affected area and analyzed the negative impacts of these dams.

Today construction of the 2,000-megawatt Chibwe Dam on the N'Mai River is already underway. The forced relocation of 15,000 people to clear out the flood zone of the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam has also begun. In August 2009 villagers were informed that they must begin to move out within two months. There have been no public assessments of the projects, no consultation with affected people within the flood zone or downstream, and no consent from local residents or the larger population of Burma.

As a result, public resistance to the dams is growing. Despite the risks of arrest, torture or death for dissent in military-ruled Burma, brave people are demanding a halt to the dams. Mass prayer ceremonies calling for the protection of the rivers have been held along the river banks and in churches up and downstream. Posters, open letters, and graffiti from students, elders and prominent leaders have objected to the dams. In a face-to-face meeting with the Burma Army's Northern Commander, local residents made it clear that no amount of compensation will make up for the losses these dams will bring to their community and future generations.

We stand with the people of Kachin State and throughout Burma who oppose these dams. The demand to stop this project has been made clear to our military rulers and now we specifically appeal to China Power Investment Corporation and the government of China to stop these dams.

Dams planned on the Irrawaddy, Mali and N'Mai Rivers



Introduction

The source of one of Southeast Asia's greatest rivers, the Irrawaddy, lies at the confluence, or Myitsone, of the Mali and N'Mai rivers in northern Burma's Kachin State. This magnificent confluence is at the heart of the Kachin people's culture and heritage and is located in what conservationists describe as one of the world's "hottest hotspots" biodiversity, also an earthquake-prone area. Yet China's state-owned China Power Investment Corporation is preparing to build seven mega dams at the confluence and upstream, damming for the first time the mainstream Irrawaddy River. The company, in cooperation with Burma's ruling military regime, is plunging ahead with the project despite serious concerns and open local resistance.

Project Facts

Seven Dams

One on the mainstream Irrawaddy and six dams on the N'Mai and Mali rivers (see map)

Power will be sold to China and distributed in China by the China Southern Power Grid Company

Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam

152-meter high dam

Installed capacity of 3,600 MW

Estimated reservoir area of 766 square kilometers

Project Partners

China Power Investment Corporation (CPI)

Asia World Company

Burma's military junta the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)



NO DAM
Myitsone

Main Concerns

- Over 60 villages, approximately 15,000 people, are in the process of being forcibly relocated without informed consent. This dislocation will cause many secondary social problems including conflicts over jobs and land, and an increase in migration and trafficking to neighboring countries. Women will be particularly impacted.
- The majority of electricity generated by the dams will be exported to China. Based on the experience of other hydropower projects in Burma, any remaining power will be used by the Burma Army and associated military businesses and will not be available or affordable to local people.
- The sale of electricity from the Myitsone Dam alone could earn the military regime over US \$500 million per year and reap foreign direct investment income of an estimated US \$3.6 billion.

High-ranking military officials and the Vice President of China Power Investment visit the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam site in September 2009



Process

- No environmental, social or health impact assessments have been publicly disclosed
- Locally-affected residents have not been consulted about the project; their attempts to voice concerns have been ignored
- A flawed compensation and resettlement process that has no independent oversight or accountability mechanisms is being carried out using intimidation by military authorities

Livelihoods, Environment and Culture

- Villagers will lose their farms and livelihoods, forests will be flooded, and fishery production will decrease; the Myitsone dam's reservoir will also submerge an area of great cultural significance to local Kachin residents and to all people of Burma
- The dams will flood forests upstream in one of the world's "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity impact downstream riverine ecosystems that are home to the endangered Irrawaddy Dolphin
- The dams will block sediment flows and alter the river's flooding cycle, disrupting the natural replenishment of water and nutrients to wetlands and floodplain areas downstream where agriculture is critical along the Irrawaddy's banks. Further downstream, the delta region provides nearly 60% of Burma's rice.

Safety

- The dams are located in a ceasefire area that is extremely unstable; an outbreak of fighting would put local people, the project, and Chinese personnel at risk
- It is well-documented that development projects in Burma are accompanied by increased militarization and human rights abuses, including forced labor and rape
- The dams are located a mere 100 kilometers from a major fault line in an earthquake-prone area; if the Myitsone dam breaks, it will flood Kachin State's capital city of 150,000 that lies just 40 kilometers downstream
- Mercury from mining operations in and along the rivers will accumulate behind the dams and transform to more toxic methyl-mercury which will then be released downstream

UPDATE

Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam

Bilateral cooperation and high level visits

On June 21 2009 Burma's Ambassador to China U Thein Lwin and the President of China Power Investment Corporation Mr. Lu Qizhou signed the Memorandum of Agreement between Burma's Department of Hydropower Implementation and CPI for "the Development, Operation and Transfer of Hydropower Projects in the Maykha, Malikha and Upstream Ayeyawady-Myitsone River Basins." According to local residents, the junta's No. 2 in the military hierarchy, Vice Senior General Maung Aye, visited the Irrawaddy River confluence following the agreement on July 19. Zhang Xiaolu, a Vice President of CPI, the Minister of Energy for Burma's military junta, and several high-ranking military officers visited the site on September 20 for a briefing about the project.

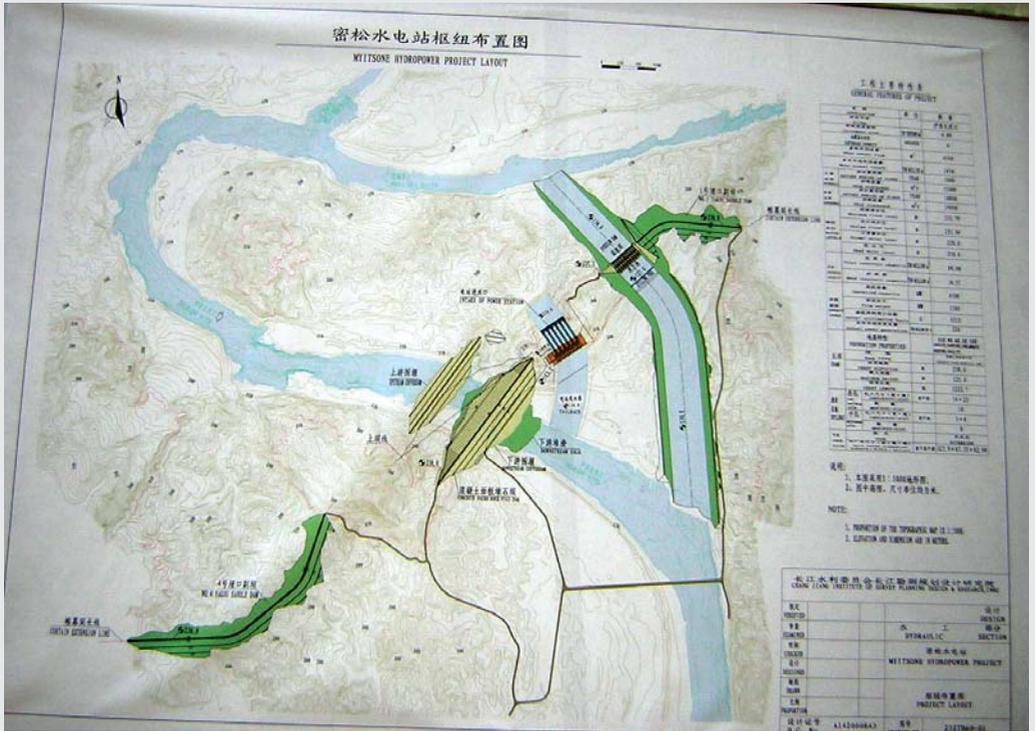


CPI Vice President Zhang Xiaolu gets a briefing from Burmese military officers

Project diagrams completed, center built

The Changjiang Institute of Surveying, Planning, Design, and Research (CISPDR) from China has completed detailed project diagrams for the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam which are now displayed at Asia World's project camp at the dam site. The camp includes barracks for dam workers and a house for CPI engineers. Construction of a communication centre for CPI and Asia World was completed in February 2009 in Munggazup village, seven miles from the Myitsone dam site (see photo).





Project layout design diagrams

China Power Investment Corporation (CPI)

CPI is the Project Manager of the “Confluence Region Hydropower Projects.” CPI was established from part of the constituent businesses of the former State Power Corporation of China. With a registered capital of US\$1.57 billion, CPI has been approved by the State Council to become a pilot state-authorized investment entity and state-owned holding corporation. It is one of China’s biggest power producers. CPI also has wholly-owned companies that are listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, including China Power International Holding Ltd and China Power Development Ltd. In early 2007 CPI’s Southern Branch set up a Myanmar Hydro Division.

Chinese dams in Burma will supply China's power grid - without following China's own standards

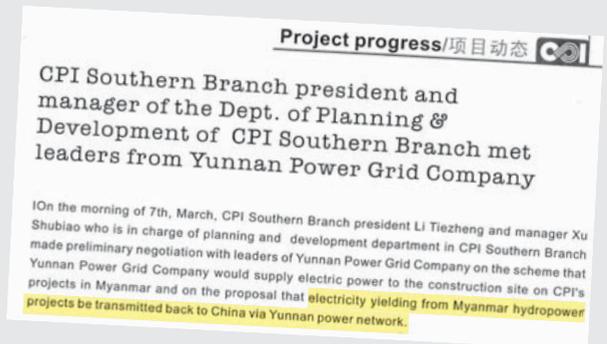
Although military officials, including from Burma's Ministry of Energy, are claiming that the electricity from the seven dams will be consumed in Burma, Chinese news reports and internal documents from CPI clearly show that the power will be transmitted to China. In March 2007 the president of CPI's Southern Branch met with Yunnan Power Grid Company (a subsidiary of China Southern Power Grid or CSG) to discuss the transmission of electricity from the projects back to China via the Yunnan power grid. Following these discussions CPI then signed a cooperation agreement with China Southern Power Grid (CSG) to co-develop the seven dams. CSG distributes power in the five southern provinces of China and is responsible for cross-regional power transmission as well as the purchase and sale of power.



Power line in Yunnan

The dams will be funded, designed, and built by a state-owned Chinese corporation and the power generated will be sent to China in line with Chinese government policies. Yet, the dam projects do not follow Chinese standards that

require assessments, consultation with affected peoples and proper resettlement plans. In addition to these domestic standards, China's State Council's "Nine Principles on Encouraging and Standardizing Foreign Investment" call for "mutual respect," "support for local livelihoods," and "attention to environmental protection."





Convoy of authorities and armed soldiers arrive in Tanghpri village

Move Out: the order and “the agreement”

On August 5 2009 villagers from Chyinghkrang (located 6 miles downstream or south of the Myitstone Dam) were summoned to a meeting with the Chairman of Myitkyina Township and officials from the Township Administrative Office, as well as officials from the Land Department and Asia World Company. Villagers were told that every family will have to move out and that they would be compensated. Since September 2009 officials have been going house to house, forcing house owners to sign an agreement to leave.¹ Sixty villages will be forced to relocate over a period of six months beginning in October 2009.

Chyinghkrang village has a population of approximately 350 and most people are farmers. The village has 2,000 acres of rubber plantations, 300 acres of mixed fruit orchards and an additional 200 acres of orange orchards that have been established for over twenty years. All of these have to be abandoned.

¹ The process has begun in Tanghpri, Chyinghkrang, Njip, Nsawp, Lahpa, Layen, Nawngkying, and N-gan villages.

Forced relocation disguised as compensation process

The forcible relocation of an estimated 15,000 people will begin in October 2009 to make way for the Myitsone Dam and its flood zone. A compensation process seems to be underway in an effort to validate the evictions. Officials from Asia World Company are currently “calculating” land size and property values ostensibly to provide compensation at some later date that has not been specified. The process is extremely flawed and is being conducted with coercion:

- Each land owner must have a land title in order to get any compensation. Yet in this rural area where armed conflicts have raged for almost fifty years, most people have inherited the land and do not have an official title from the government.
- In some cases only the building costs are considered, not the value of the land.
- Calculations of farm land are based on rough estimations; the exact area is not measured.
- For those lands with plantations or orchards, only one tree is recorded for every ten square feet, regardless of how many trees are actually planted in that area.
- Villagers are forced to sign compensation agreements regardless of their accuracy in calculating land size, number of trees, or value of properties. A land officer, village tract officer, and officials from the government sponsored Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA) come to each farm and demand signatures.



Paddy fields and rubber plantations of Chyinghkrang village will be flooded



Construction of the Chibwe Dam at Nan Oo Village

Chibwe Dam

The Chibwe Dam, the second largest of the seven dams, will generate an estimated 2,000 MW of power. The dam site is on the N'mai River at Mandung village, ten miles from the town of Chibwe. Buildings for staff, laborers and government officials and two helipads were built in Mandung in mid-2008.

Since late 2008 technicians have been conducting surveys and collecting core samples and construction on the main dam has now begun (see photos). The sounds of drilling machines and explosions and blasts along the river bank have caused sleepless nights for villagers and changed the quality of water.

Construction of a smaller dam on the Chibwe Stream that will provide power for the construction of all seven dams began in April 2007 and is now nearly complete. During the construction process over 100 acres of farm lands were confiscated.

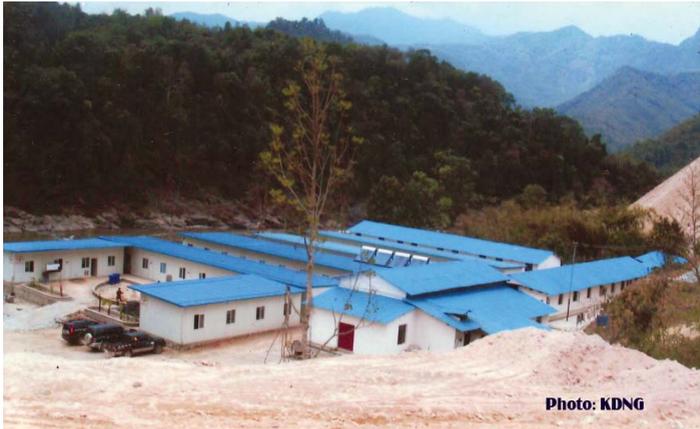


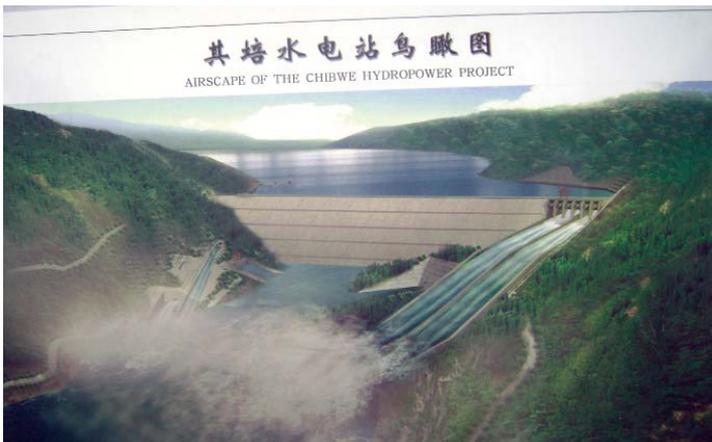
Photo: KDNIG

Worker housing at the Chibwe Dam site



Photo: KDNIG

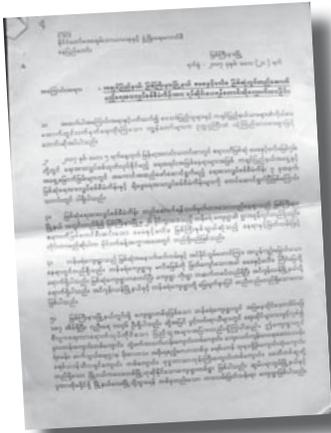
Construction of the Chibwe Dam at Nan Oo Village



Depiction of Chibwe Dam

Resistance

Despite the grave risks of openly discussing or opposing any development projects undertaken by the regime, there is considerable resistance to the project. Facing possible arrest, torture, and death, brave people from all walks of life in Kachin State are speaking out against the destructive dams.

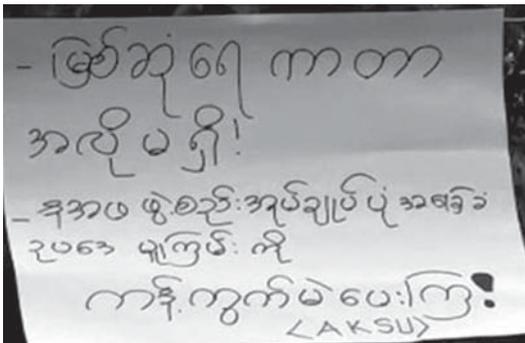


Open letter of objection by respected leaders

On May 21, 2007, twelve respected elders and leaders from townships across Kachin State sent an objection letter to Senior General Than Shwe calling for a halt to the project.

Public displays of objection increasing

Over the past two years, “no dam” and “no Myitsone” have been spray-painted across bridges and other public places in the capital of Myitkyina while leaflets opposing the dam have been pasted in prominent public places in Chibwe, Myitkyina and other towns and villages across Kachin State.



Messages against the dam posted in Myitkyina

Numerous public prayer services against the dam have been held, including one in early October where 300 villagers assembled at the confluence from several villages and faiths.

When villagers were summoned to meet officials in Chyinghkrang village in September this year, several attended the two-day meeting shirt-less, traditionally seen as a sign of disrespect. On October 9th, the Burma Army's Northern Commander and government departments met with over one hundred residents from villages near the Myitson. At the public meeting, the women's group from Tanghpree village openly appealed to the Commander not to relocate the villagers.

“Kachin people have a responsibility to step up and demand an end to the project. If they don't, they will have a huge historical debt to pay because the confluence area is an important part of Kachin heritage.” (Kachin pastor)

Prayer service at the confluence on October 10 2009





Local women appeal to Northern Commander

On October 9, 2009 the Tanghre Village Women’s Group made a public appeal to the military’s top official for Kachin State:

“I am speaking on behalf of the housewives of Tanghre Village. We have been living at the confluence for over 100 years and have established productive farms here. The area is good for cultivation and our farms have many different types of crops. These farms are not just for us today but for our future generations.

If we are moved to a new place it will not be good for us. We will have to take years to build up diverse and productive farms and they will never be the same as what we have now. We cannot bring our farms with us when we move. We will have to buy all of our food and our children will buy unhealthy snacks in the shops. We are worried about health and education problems.

We do not want to move and we appeal to you to bring our concerns to Naypyidaw for consideration.”

Tanghppe:
Villagers at the confluence defend their heritage

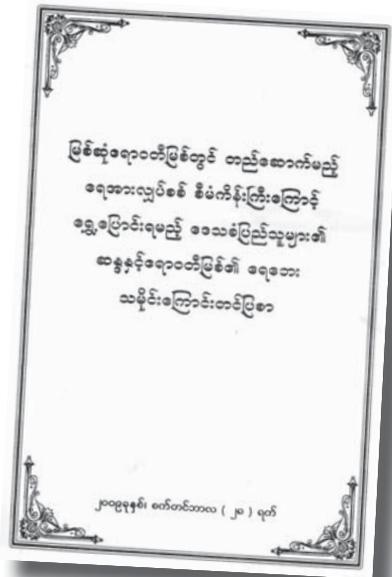
The village of Tanghppe, population 1,075, is located at the confluence. Several historical churches are located in the village, including a main mission center of the Roman Catholic Church. Today residents are documenting the history of the village.

In 2004 the entire village wrote an open letter to the Kachin Consultative Body and Kachin ceasefire groups outlining their concerns about the dam and calling for action to stop its construction.

In October this year they submitted another open letter to Senior General Than Shwe detailing their opposition to the dam. The letter recommends that surveys should be conducted before a project begins to determine long-term consequences and the project should be stopped if there is the possibility of destructive impacts.

The dam will destroy the lives and property of the people along the downstream Irrawaddy River in towns and villages, big and small alike. Farmland, cattle, and historical sites which cannot be purchased with money will be lost. The future of local residents is uncertain and under constant threat depending on the life span of the dam.

(excerpt from Tanghppe village open letter to Than Shwe)



A Call to Action

Mr. LU Qizhou

President

China Power Investment Corporation (CPI)

28 Building 3, No.28, Financial Street, Xicheng District

Beijing, China

Subject – Demand to Stop Dam Projects in Kachin State, Burma

In regard to the June 21, 2009 Memorandum of Agreement signed between yourself and Burma’s Ambassador to China U Thein Lwin for “the Development, Operation and Transfer of Hydropower Projects in the Maykha, Malikha and Upstream Ayeyawady-Myitsone River Basins,” we, the Kachin Development Networking Group, are writing to express concerns about these projects, to bring your attention to the considerable local opposition to the projects, and to demand their halt in order to avoid negative consequences to the local population and to your company. We are a network of concerned residents that has been monitoring the project and its impacts since 2005.

Our immediate attention is with the imminent construction of the Irrawaddy Myitsone Dam at the confluence of the Mali and N’mai rivers. Specific concerns are as follows:

- Social concerns: Over 60 villages are in the process of being forcibly relocated without proper resettlement plans. 15,000 people will lose their means of livelihood including farming, fishing, and non-timber forest product collection. This dislocation will cause many secondary social problems including conflicts over jobs and land, and an increase in migration and trafficking to neighboring countries. It will exacerbate existing problems of unemployment, drug addiction, and HIV/AIDS in the area. Women will be particularly impacted.
- Environmental concerns: The reservoir, estimated at 766 square kilometers, will flood areas in one of the world’s “hottest hotspots”

of biodiversity upstream of the dam. Blocking the confluence will prevent the seasonal migration of fish, impacting the number and diversity of fish. The dam will also impact the habitat of the endangered Irrawaddy dolphin downstream.

- **Livelihood concerns:** In addition to the impact on fisheries, the dam will block sediment flows and alter the river's flooding cycle, disrupting the natural replenishment of water and nutrients to floodplain areas downstream where agriculture is critical along the Irrawaddy's banks. Further downstream, the delta region provides nearly 60% of Burma's rice.
- **Safety concerns:** The dams are located in a ceasefire area that is extremely unstable; an outbreak of fighting would put the project and Chinese personnel at risk. The dam is also less than 100 kilometers from a major fault line in an earthquake-prone area; if the dam should break, it would flood Kachin State's capital of 150,000 that lies just 40 kilometers downstream of the dam.
- **Cultural concerns:** The confluence is integral to Kachin identity and history and is a natural and cultural treasure for the whole country.
- **Standards are not being followed:** No environmental, social or health impact assessments have been publicly disclosed; locally-affected residents have not been consulted about the project and their attempts to voice concerns have been ignored. The result is a forced relocation process that uses intimidation by military authorities and has no independent oversight or accountability mechanisms.

Given the current situation of the Myitsone project, it is impossible for CPI to follow the State Council's "Nine Principles on Encouraging and Standardizing Foreign Investment," the green guidelines that are awaiting approval by the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) and the Ministry of Commerce (MOF COM), or CPI's own Corporate Social Responsibility standards.

It is well-documented that development projects in Burma are accompanied by increased militarization and associated abuses, including forced labor and rape, and it is well known that the military ruling Burma does not tolerate dissent. Yet there is considerable and growing local opposition to the Irrawaddy Myitsone dam, including public displays of objection. Open letters, including from respected elders and leaders from townships across Kachin State, have been sent to Senior General Than Shwe calling for a halt to the project but the appeals have been ignored. Now, based on the above concerns, we KDNG appeal to you.

We urge CPI to immediately stop construction of the Myitsone Dam and other dams in Kachin State and pull out from investment with Burma's military regime for the sake of the good image of your company and to avoid being complicit in multiple serious human rights abuses associated with the project.

Cc:

Mr. Hu Chunguang, Coordinator, CPI Myanmar Division
State Council
National Development and Reform Commission
Ministry of Environmental Protection
State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Commerce

“It is our wish that these Chinese hydro power companies realize the danger and disastrous effects upon the people to be caused by the construction of the dam. Local residents do not want to leave their homeland which they inherited from their ancestors.”
(excerpt from Tanghphe village open letter to Than Shwe)

“We Kachin do not like the Myitsone hydropower project, everyone from our youngest babies to our oldest elders. The Myitsone confluence has been part of our Kachin culture and history for generations and it must be protected. The Myitsone not only benefits us Kachin living here but all people along the Irrawaddy River throughout Burma.” (Kachin cultural leader)

